



Neubergthal Notes

Kohmt krijj nohm darp

February 2017

Volume 15 • Issue 1

Board Members

- Terry Mierau – chair
- Shaun Friesen – vice chair
- Ken Hamm – treasurer
- Karen Martens
- Joe Braun
- Norma Giesbrecht
- Harv Heinrichs – bookkeeper
- Ray Hamm – executive assistant, fundraising

Upcoming Events

- **March 14 – Annual Meeting**, 7:30 p.m., Neubergthal Community Centre. Come share your vision for Neubergthal – everyone welcome.
- **Seedy Saturday** – date TBD – a Saturday in late February or early March. If you have been collecting, saving your own vegetable and flower seeds from your parents and grandparents come share your stories and exchange seeds.
- **Story Telling Evening** – date TBD – mid to late March. Where was your family in the 1870s?

For information about these events or the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation contact Ray Hamm - 204-324-4115 or rmhamm@icloud.com

If you would like to receive future mailings of Neubergthal Notes contact Ken Hamm - 204-324-6424 or timekeeper@mymts.net

Klippenstein barn and Neubergthal Heritage Foundation

The heritage committee is now talking of the Klippenstein housebarn instead of the Eddie Schmidt housebarn. Klippenstein families started the yard and have a long history on the yard, so we now talk of the Klippenstein place (Peter, son Bernhard and then grandson John). Eddie Schmidt and his donation of the yard to NHF will be acknowledged when the project is ready for this - thank you, Eddie.

Secondly, thinking about the yard and these buildings, and also about village needs, is about more than money; NHF is not choosing the cheapest development plan.

What are the goals? NHF is to preserve aspects of heritage, and also to tell the stories of prairie settlement and the village. A four season gathering space is needed, for tours, for events, for partnerships with schools and other agencies, and also for family and community use. The present community centre is getting old and will not be thoroughly rebuilt.

Several options have been considered

1. Keep the house, get rid of the barn.
2. Take down the barn and build new structure to replicate the old, with new materials.
3. Take it down and rebuild, using as much old material as possible.
4. Restore outside, clean up inside - leave the inside rough and unfinished. Add a new building for (community and tour) gathering space.
5. Work with present structure and space, to maximize visibility and the story of the barn.

NHF chose #5. The yard and the buildings were a gift to NHF. Even if it was old and run down, it was a gift.

The barn all by itself tells many stories about this village and early settlement of the Canadian prairies, about Mennonites in Manitoba and about Mennonites in general.

According to village stories and also from an interview by former teacher Tony Driedger with P G Hamm - farmer, teacher, trustee, photographer - this barn (the Klippenstein barn) and the barn on Ray and Marilyn's yard are the two oldest buildings in the village. Dale and Julie's house is also from 1876, it was moved here from Rosetown.

This barn is very unique. Some buildings from southern Manitoba have been moved to the Steinbach Mennonite Museum. This barn may be the only building that was moved from the East Reserve to the West Reserve. It was built on the east side of the Red River, taken apart when the families moved here and rebuilt on the present location. Why did they not just sell the building and build a new one here? The matching Roman numerals carved onto the timbers tell their own story of reconstruction.

There are amazing similarities and some differences between this barn, the Hamm housebarn and the Friesen housebarn. Parks Canada has said there is not only historical significance here, but also architectural significance. These three barns are an important part of that.

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Kohmt trigj nohm Darp – Come back to the Village

Bergthal School



The Altbergthal Public School was located three miles west of Altona on the west bank of Buffalo Creek, just west of the village. Although the exact age of the structure housing the school is not known, its stack-wall construction suggests it was built well before 1900. It may have once been a private school located in a private home. It is believed that this private Altbergthal School became a public school in 1904.

In 1965-66, three school districts – Altbergthal, Rudnerweide and Neuhoftung – were combined to form New Hope Consolidated School District. The aim was to continue the rural, small-school way of education, instead of sending children to schools in larger centers. The Altbergthal school building was moved to the New Hope schoolyard, where it served as classroom space.

Fire destroyed the New Hope school building in January of 1979, and a larger one was built in 1981. The Altbergthal building was no longer needed. In 1982, a group of Altbergthal School alumni negotiated with the Rhineland Agricultural Society to have the building moved to Altona, where it was used for a time as a school museum, with tours being offered to the public.

In 2010, the Altona Town Council decided that, since the school had ceased its function as a museum, and was deteriorating and serving no purpose to the town, it would be demolished.

In June of 2010, a larger group, consisting partly of Altbergthal School alumni and partly of community members interested in Mennonite history, got together and began formal proceedings to relocate and restore the building for the purposes of preserving the history of education in the West Reserve; specifically, the tradition of the one-room community school in Mennonite settlements.

Neubergthal connection

In determining where the school would be relocated to, since no public or municipal properties exist in the original Altbergthal district anymore, the group decided that Neubergthal would be the next best thing, a natural location.

Through negotiations with the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation, the Bergthal School committee was given permission to place the school building on the grounds of the Klippenstein Housebarn restoration project, and was able to formulate an agreement with the NHF regarding restoration and maintenance.

Purposes

Over time, the school will be developed as an interpretive centre/museum depicting the history of education in the West Reserve, focusing on the first small community schools. The building will prove useful as well to groups looking for a classroom in which to conduct courses or a lecture series, or to use as a small performance venue. It also enhances the village history tours that Neubergthal is known for. The Red River Technical Vocational Area intends to continue to incorporate the building into its high-school level agriculture/sustainable energy program. Students will spend classroom time here developing projects related to sustainable energy resources.

Fund-raising efforts

The exterior renovations of the school are basically complete and interior renovations are nearly done. The extensive interior renovations undertaken in 2016 brought us \$12,500 into our line of credit, but recent fundraising of over \$10,000 leaves us only \$2,500 into our line of credit. To complete the upgrades we plan to refinish the floor, purchase storm windows, and install eavestroughs. The roughly \$10,000 needed to finish these upgrades will be offset by a grant of \$3,500 from the Altona Community Foundation.

The members of our school board are: Lawrence Klippenstein, Alfred Klippenstein, Ray Klippenstein, Joe Braun, Don Klippenstein, Jim Dyck, John Giesbrecht, Lawrence Giesbrecht, Albert Falk, Bernie Wiebe and Abe Ens the representative from the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.

We continue to ask for donations – please make cheques out to:

Neubergthal Heritage Foundation (School)
Att: Joe Braun, Box 444, Altona, MB R0G 0B0.
The Altbergthal School is now the property and responsibility of the NHF.
All contributions are tax deductible.

Guess the English Translation / Page 4

1. Schlätschooh
2. Bratschlätje
3. Schneediehn
4. lessbohn
5. Jripp

Kohmt trigj nohm Darp – Come back to the Village

Thoughts and memories about making outdoor rinks

Johnny Kehler grew up in Neubergthal and played hockey for many years, in the village and later in Altona. He has been the 'ice-man' in Neubergthal for many years - THANK YOU. Often he would be out on the ice here with his grandchildren, skating or playing hockey.

Making an outdoor skating rink

- Find a level spot on the north side of a row of tall trees - a location like this would provide shade so that the rink would last longer in spring.
- Wait for cold weather and for snow - 2 or 3 inches of snow is best - get an even layer, pack it down (drive a car over everywhere).
- Soak the whole layer - if you don't soak it clear through, there will be air pockets under the ice.
- Let it freeze.
- Flood repeatedly till you have smooth ice, do not make too thick a layer in any one flooding.

How they used to make the rink in Neubergthal

- Find a location on somebody's yard - the rink has been on many yards.
- Get two horses, a water tank and a tank pump.
- Especially for the first flooding use water from a water hole often the 'village dugout.' The first flooding takes a lot of water to soak the snow.
- "Schlaumpeh" - using shovels to smooth and pack the slush.

A whole crew was needed to make the ice. Water was pumped from the dugout or the well to fill a tank, horses would then bring the tank to the rink. Since the horses could not walk on the ice the tank would have to be pushed or pulled by the guys - someone steering, others pushing, someone to control the water flow, others with a shovel at the back outlet of the tank to spread the flow rather than hitting only one spot or one stream. Then more people with shovels to smooth the slush and tap it down and pack it.

Later floodings would often use water from wells in the village - not so far to go, and shelter from wind. Two tanks would usually be enough for one fresh coat of ice. Some farmers were cautious about the use of their well water because they wanted to be sure that the wells would not run dry before spring.

Johnny Kehler has kept records: twice in the last 20 years, the first flooding of the rink has been in the first week of November.



Johnny Kehler still makes ice at the rink in Neubergthal. Below left, how they used to make ice. The rink is open to the public.

A few times, the first skating was only 3 or 4 days after the first flooding. More than half of the time, the rink has been ready for skating before the end of November.

For more stories about the village rink(s), about hockey and other sports, see chapter 9 in the book, *Neubergthal, a Mennonite Street Village*.

Written by Ray Hamm, with excerpts from Neubergthal, a Mennonite Street Village

If you want to purchase a copy of the book, \$40.00, contact Ray Hamm, rmhamm@icloud.com or call 204-324-4115.

For record keepers: *Neubergthal Notes* has been intermittent in the last several years. The most recent *Notes* was December 2014 (listed as Volume 1 Issue 1) The pattern of more regular *Neubergthal Notes* ended in 2012. In that more regular pattern the 2012 issues were listed as Volume 10. In keeping with that sequence (volume numbers, based on earlier years, were 2 less than the calendar year) this issue is Volume 15 even though there was only the one issue between Volume 10 and this one.

Kohmt trigj nohm Darp – Come back to the Village

Neubergthal Culture Day



On Saturday, Sept. 10, 2016 the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation hosted an afternoon of programs aimed at promoting local culture and history, in the form of music, storytelling, and short, educational presentations. These programs were spread among three restored buildings in the village. After registering at the community centre, and as the leaves on the Manitoba maples began to turn gold and poplar leaves turned bronze, visitors meandered about the village in calm, sunny, autumn weather.

In the *schien* of the Ray and Marilyn Hamm housebarn, Linda Hiebert performed music in English, and Dennis Reimer sang Plautdietsch songs accompanied on the keyboard by his wife, Phyllis Reimer.

In the Bergthal schoolhouse, writer Armin Wiebe reminisced about his experiences growing up in several *darps* in the West Reserve; Hans Werner of the U. of W. gave a brief lecture on the history of the Low German language; and local massage therapist and *tae kwon do* instructor Sergej Kanke described his life in Mennonite villages in Communist Russia.

Low-German presentations took place in the former H.F. Hamm house (now used by the village as a picnic shelter). There, farmer Shane Friesen spoke about the Plautdietsch club he has organized for youth in the Altona area; local author and Plautdietsch enthusiast Jack Klassen presented odd sayings and poems/song lyrics; Joyce Kehler Friesen and Rose Hildebrand shared their recollections about their childhoods in Neubergthal; and octogenarian Cleo Heinrichs told her story about achieving “fame and fortune” in the West Reserve, first as a columnist in the local papers, and then as a radio personality with Golden West Broadcasting.

Following the programs, visitors returned to the community centre for a meal of homemade soups and

plautz, and bread baked in one of the village’s traditional bake-ovens.

The day was topped off with an evening concert in the Krahn barn loft, where many concerts have taken place over the years. Jess Reimer and her husband Jeremy Hamm performed with singers Keri Latimer and Vanessa Kuzina, and a five-piece band. The show was a tribute to the music of Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, and Linda Ronstadt, and was very enthusiastically received by a sold-out audience!

Organizers were pleased with how the special day unfolded, even though they had expected a slightly larger turnout for the afternoon program. As one visitor said: “It doesn’t matter how many people came. The fact that the event happened — the presenters, the venues, the setting — has historical value and is important to keeping the fabric of village culture intact.”

Submitted by Louis Braun, originally published in Heritage Postings

**Join us for the September 2017
Neubergthal Culture Day – date
TBD. Come for a day of heritage,
Low German, food and fun.**

BARN continued from page 1

NHF thinking and projected plans

Solid footings have been put in place for the barn and the house. Both buildings, especially the barn, have been raised and levelled.

The exterior of the barn will be restored. The inside of the barn was changed a lot for the dairy operation; it would be very hard to restore the

interior of the barn. The Friesen housebarn and the Hamm housebarn still show many of the interior patterns, materials and building styles.

The main, centre, part of the barn will become a multipurpose space that can be used for meetings, events, gatherings, meals or other activities. A lot, almost as much as possible, of the original material and style of the inside of the building will be visible. The lean-to’s (ohvesied) will be rebuilt, along the north side and in the south-east corner. Washrooms would probably be in the north side lean-to. A kitchen will be built on the outside, connected to the barn - maybe a larger “summa chaech” on the north side.

The barn will get new shingles (the house has already been done). Maybe the whole roof will be rebuilt. There will be a new floor.

The exterior of the house is almost completely restored. The inside of the house is to be completed. The school project needs to be finished (floor, windows, eaves troughs). Outside washrooms are needed.

A capital campaign is planned, seeking private and public funding, to cover the cost of these projects.

For more immediate details, you are welcome to come to Neubergthal Heritage Foundation meetings or talk with members of the NHF.

Translation / from page 2

1. Skates
2. Toboggan
3. Snow Bank
4. Skating Rink
5. Flu